Kate Carew and Countess of Warwick Run Gamut from Peacocks to Marriage

"Aunt Kate" Relates How She Took Advantage of Ten Precious Minutes to Glean from the Noted English Philanthropist-Publicist Her Views on Many Subjects.

By Kate Carew.

OH, TO BE a countess!

I couldn't help thinking how well adapted I am for such a position, while on the way to the Ritz-Carlton to interview the last titled arrival. A German savant said once that our desires are presentiments of our faculties. If he is right, and German savants always are, no wonder that I question the decree of fate. It seems to me that I could fit very easily into the frame of a court circle.

For years I have read myself to sleep by perusing the roadly alluring pages of Burke's Peerage and the Almanach de Gotha. Am remarkably conversant with the hereditary rights of all the dear little earls who come over here to marry our big American heiresses, but confess with shame that I am ignorant of the minor points of etiquette necessary to note before one is admitted to the Peeresses' Gallery at coronations or to a front pew when crowned heads have obsequies.

I know, for example, that you must back out of a royal presence, but, with some one who is not exactly royal but within a stone's throw of it, would it be correct to do the same thing, or should one merely back in? Ought I to courtesy, holding my skirt with both hands? It is so difficult with a bobble skirt. And what should I do with my sketch book? Put it on the floor while I performed my genuflections? And, after I had assumed my Star-Spangled Banner attitude, would it not be awkward to lean over and pick it up again?

Should I conceal the fact that I am embarassed, nonchalantly straighten my hat and say, "Hody, countess?" as if I were accustomed to interview nobility every day and, to tell the truth, a little bored by it?

PRIZE OF TEN GOLDEN MINUTES.

Really, I couldn't tell and had, finally, to call in the assistance of Mr. Lee Keedick, with whom I had been in communication ever since the pilot left Sandy Hook. He had insured the countess's life for $100,000, arranged her tour and, incidentally, exerted himself tremendously in my behalf, so that I was to have ten uninterrupted moments alone with her. Together alone! Think of it! Ten minutes with a real live countess!

I hope this won't get into the society columns; it would look as if I were trying to push myself.

"Ah, Mr. Keedick," chuckled I, "shall I address her 'your grace,' 'm' lady'? Shall I begin, 'Now, tell me, earless, do you believe in birth'"——

The Keedick information bureau then became authority for the statement that I need not worry about the etiquette of the occasion, as the countess had enough for two; that I should address her as plain Lady Warwick.

I had a dress rehearsal. 'Lady Warwick!' 'Lady Warwick!' I said it over and over. I did not want her to suspect for a moment that my lips were unaccustomed to the touch of titles, a fact that relatives and friends, assisting at the function, did not allow me to forget.

"Suppose it will be rather hard for you to come down to our level afterward," said one.

"I shall try to forget," I answered, a bit loftily.

Another resented my sang froid. You know how cool and self-possessed I can be in a crisis. "You don't seem dazed at all," remonstrated she.

Your Aunt Kate has remarked from time to time the sort of camaraderie existing between writers and people of all sorts, high and low. The average society woman would be much more self-conscious meeting a queen than a feminine scribbler would think of being, for she would know nothing of that common ground on which stand souls attuned to kindred arts, the give-and-take territory where boundary lines a very comfortable jungly sort of waiting place.

In this cosey jungle I arranged my mental quadrant and took observations. I have been far from the madding crowd of late. My re-entrance into it was a matter of great interest.

Item: I made note of the discreet rubbering when I mentioned the unimportant fact of my arrival. "Miss Carew!" A few, undoubtedly, remembered the marvellous luncheon party I gave and gave away when the hotel opened and my first public cigarette smoked under the chaperonage of the maître d'hotel, who was quite agonized at my amateur efforts in that stronghold of professional skill.

Item: The smart afternoon coats worn by the hotel officials at 10 in the morning, the sort our men wear to pink teas and the neat brass-buttoned uniforms of the hotel staff.

Item: The "bowlers"—note the English term—set tiptilted on the head, and the trousers rolled high, very high, almost to the shoe tops. Still rainin' in Lunnon after all these years. Oh, these climatic stops!

Just then I heard a young English chappie remark to a pretty American girl:

"Oh, I say, where does one leave one's coat?"

Pretty American responded with a pertness atoned for by a dimple:

"Where two put two's coats, I suppose."

"Oh, I say, you are funny," responded the young man.

One led him off to put one's coat away and I continued my quiet scene painting.

Item: A line of callow youths emulating in their walk the turkey trot.

Item: Lack of ostentation. Real comfort. Well trained servants, whose hereditary sense have made them automata, yet who have not lost the human note. No flunkeyism. No acrobatic bustling. Noiseless machinery. It seemed to Miss Carew, as she sat in the shade of the jungle, that Lady Warwick ought to feel very happy at stepping into such a staid, Old World atmosphere after the sea and land changes she had just encountered.

GETTING NEAR TO THE PRESENCE.

The page who had taken my card fluttered into view. He had a short colloquy with the hotel "clark," who, in turn, dialogued with a thin, earnest-visaged young man with a British articulation of the most exaggerated sort and a suave spine. I learned afterward that he is Lady Warwick's secretary, Mr. Taylor.

He approached the jungle and cautiously peered in. "Are you Miss Carew?" inquired he.

I nodded.

"Lady Warwick is so sorry to keep you waiting. She will see you in just a moment. So sorry, so"——

He stepped along to an accompaniment of soft "sos" (plural of so).

In a few moments he returned. This time he said:

"Will you go up now, Miss Carew? Hope you aren't tired waiting. So sorry. Will you take the lift?"

Two young men wiggled themselves into the machine as it started. It moved so smoothly that I had the impression the whole establishment was going with me and was amazed that the red velvet chair and the green foliage receded from view instead of keeping in the picture.

With a commendable newspaper spirit the young men apparently intended to assist at my interview. I tried to look them down with the cold, cruel stare of the journalist whose appointment has been arranged. The secretary's method was much more efficacious. He is a diplomat. They may have stepped off somewhere as the lift lifted, but they just seemed to melt away under the beneficent influence of his voice and smile.

As I stepped into the corridor a door not far away opened, as if timed to my coming.

In the rectangular aperture stood a tall, stunning figure, gowned in French blue.

Before I had time for more than a fleeting glance I heard a well modulated, rather deep voice say: "Oh, Miss Carew. So sorry to have kept you waiting. So good of you to come. I hope you haven't been downstairs long. Will you forgive me?"

I had intended to make an opening speech something like this:

"Ah, Lady Warwick, it is an unconscionable hour to disturb your matinal slumbers, but the exigencies of the newspaper profession have forced upon me a necessitous haste and a seeming indifference to your well being which is far removed from my individual relation thereto."

Rather eloquent, that! Even if I am not a titled lecturer, I guess I know how one should be addressed.

I did not get a chance to say it. I made the mistake of listening to advisers who claimed that Lady Warwick would resent being disturbed at such an early hour. They will cling to the belief that fine ladyism and noon rising are synonymous.

Lady Warwick has a beautiful hand to

IN THE RECTANGULAR APERTURE STOOD A TALL, STUNNING FIGURE GOWNED IN FRENCH BLUE.

IN THIS COZY JUNGLE I ARRANGED MY MENTAL QUADRANT AND TOOK OBSERVATIONS.

cannot be torn down, for they never have been built. I did not try to explain this, for I knew she would not understand any more than I could make clear that as one ascends the hill to the heights the horizon broadens, for my critic did not have an horizon, only a skyline, and there is such a difference.

Yet her fear was contagious. I found myself in the foyer of the Ritz-Carlton saying in an undertone, "Now, buck up, Kate. Don't go to the desk and say that Lady Carew would like to see Miss Warwick. Keep tight hold. Forget your relatives. Remember, now, Lady Warwick, Miss Carew, not"——

Facing the office desk, I did stutter a little. I caught the "Lady Carew" midway from throat to mouth and substituted "Warwick," then mentioned my own unassuming nomenclature with the air of one who knows that kind hearts are more than coronets and simple faith than Norman blood.

Not that there was anything terrifying in the presence of the hotel "clark," or, in fact, anywhere about the nice, homey place. With an eye to artistic effect, I selected a big armchair, with red velvet upholstery, picked off in gold. It was placed midway between two tall palms and made match the physique which gained for her in her youth the right to be called one of the handsomest women in England. She took mine, raising it high and drew me gently into the room, still talking with a vital, early morning zest which was perfectly amazing, considering the fact of her recent arrival, after a particularly unpleasant voyage.

"I have a racking, shocking headache," she remarked. "Such a dull, stormy time, the slowest trip the Mauretania ever made. Awful winds!"

It would have been absurd to ask this picture of health if she had suffered from the usual form of ocean sickness. I put the question away in cold storage, with several other bromides—"What do you think of our skyscrapers," "American girls?" "What is your impression of America?" etc.

My disclaimer, "You don't look as if you knew what a headache means," had more truth than is ordinarily concealed in a rapid-fire compliment.

Mrs. Paget—this was before she was titled—received me one morning early in a wonderful brocaded kimono of deep yellow. It was most artistic, most negligée and quite suited to her peculiar type. Yet the smart, finished appearance of Lady Warwick was equally successful, even more so, as an indication of character. It seemed to emphasize her alertness, her unquenchable joy in living, the vitality which would be exuberant if it were not restrained.

Just why the countess wore her hat at that hour and in her own room I cannot say. Possibly nobility sleeps in its hat. If she was merely following precedent, I can assert that there is no evidence in its appearance that her slumbers had been disturbed by any anxiety concerning the abolition of the House of Lords or the abrogation of the hereditary privileges she may possess and to which, in spite of her progressive character, she, no doubt, clings with all a real woman's pertinacity.

Her gown was a one-piece dress of transparent voile made over white taffeta, the belt in the time honored location with no suggestion of an Empire effect. The white waistcoat was finished with a roll collar and a tiny black velvet tailored bow. The lines of the dress were simple and attractive, the tint the exact shade of blue to bring out her good points.

The hat was of corn color straw, big and and flat, a regular garden party sort of hat, circled by ostrich plumes of Nattier blue, circled and unperky. It covered but did not conceal an abundance of snow white hair, parted low and piled in soft masses over the ears, the chiffon lining more intense in color than the gown. As the brim drooped here and there there were mysterious shadows, an admirable background for the white hair and aristocratic face.

I am spending a little time on the description of the costume, for it is rare to find a woman whose heart and soul are engaged in serious matters, yet who is perfectly gowned, perfectly groomed, who does not, in a word, disdain the commas in the paragraphs of life.

A good maid? I have known a woman who was interested in the welfare of souls who had two maids and always looked scrubby.

Lady Warwick's face is moulded into the standard form, which it takes centuries of breeding to produce. Unlike many of her class, it is impressed with her individuality, stamping the type. Her nose is aquline, with a hint of piquancy; her chin firm; her ears are concealed by her wavy hair, their huge diamond hoop earrings twinkling and twirling as she talks vivaciously.

The nice old Anglo-Saxon word "buxom" comes to mind as I study my vis-à-vis, but "buxom" suggests a dairymaid coloring, and Lady Warwick's interesting pallor is as far removed from ruddy cheeks as are her athletic lines and symmetric build from the short, stocky frame of the peasant woman.

Her eyes are the gray-blue of the intellectual, keen and kindly. They look directly into yours. They are windows of the soul, and not of the ground glass variety. About brow and eyes she recalls Ellen Terry. Her mouth is long and narrow. It is a generous mouth and she smiles frequently. She gestures with the same largess of energy. She has broad shoulders and the riding back, which remind one of her former prowess in the hunt and her four-in-hand expertness. She is deep chested, like a Niebelungenlied singer, and has long limbs.

It is stated that Lady Warwick is fifty years old. Such a statement is, of course, founded on so-called facts. Basing my reading on the true statistics—health, poise, virility—I would slap off quite a number of years and defy argument.

I made directly for a chair, modestly placed in the comfortable sitting room, or, should I say, "salon," in speaking of the apartment of a countess? Anyway, my good intention was frustrated by the second, well modulated remark:

"Won't you please allow me to sit there, Miss Carew, so I can answer the telephone?"

I changed quickly.

This was rather a dramatic introduction, for, you know, the modern play opens with a telephone talk, which explains to the audience what it is all going to be about.

We followed theatrical precedent and talked telephone for a moment or two, to clear the field for the real action.

"Notice any big changes?" I chirped while I was aranging my mental list and recalled the fact that the countess had been here several times before.

"I came only yesterday, you know." Her tone was quite apologetic. "Do come and talk to me after my lecture trip is over. I know I shall have many things to tell you. I can feel that there are mighty changes all about me, no less stimulating because they are unseen."

I have just been reading a charming history that Lady Warwick wrote about her former home, entitled "Warwick Castle and Its Earls." I remembered my long-ago trip there, and particularly the exquisite white peacocks strutting along the velvet sward, which rippled across the terrace like an unrolled length of emerald chiffon.

"Do tell me something about your wonderful peacocks. Are they still alive? They told me when I was there that one of them was a hundred years old."

The countess looked pleasingly reminiscent.

"I can't say accurately. The oldest man on the place remembered that when he was a boy he was told that the parti-colored peacock was a centenarian then. It is dead now. A fox bit off its head. Really it was getting to be rather dilapidated. The feathers were quite shabby."

Think of living to be such a wise old bird and then meeting such an ignominious death. Giddy youth, like your Aunt Kate's, has its compensations.

The countess was as serious about the loss of the peacock as if she had recalled the demise of one of her ancestors, a belted earl, perchance.

I asked: "Don't you think having beautiful objects about a child has a direct effect in the moulding of its character?"

I was thinking as I questioned her if the charm of manner which puts one so quickly at ease, the beauty of mind and person were not the normal results of a cause like this.

"Of course," she said, "the child welfare questions, those bearing on the education and care of the little ones, constitute my particular work. I lecture on those topics while I am here. My work is my whole existence. It always has been. But I am not especially interested in the phases of the subject that relate to the rich children. The empty little lives appeal to me. It is those lives I want to improve."

"But you think color has an educational effect on the mind?" persisted I, "and particularly on the sensitive minds of children?"

"I am not sure," said the countess, slowly. "Some people, both adults and children, are sensitive to it; some are not, and the non-sensitive ones are equally intelligent, I think. Naturally, the little mind responds to intelligence and refinement, but so far the primitive rather than the psychologic facts have engrossed my attention—cleanliness, sanitation, food, hygiene."

The countess's glance followed mine, which had been caught by the allurement of, oh, such a bit of femininity thrown with artistic grace across a chair back. It was a filmy, frilly thing of ecru net, with garlands of those cute little satin roses attached to it here and there. You know, the countess formed an Anti-Dress Society once, the members of which were solemnly pledged not to own more than one tea gown at a time. "Better a tea gown like this than a dozen half-way attempts," might have been its motto.

"I suppose color is important, in a way," she murmured.

THEN CAME A TING-A-LING.

I wasn't there to talk dress with the countess, just as if she were a Gaiety girl engaged to a Ducal Dunce, but there's no knowing what zigzag the conversation might have taken, tempted like this, if at that moment the telephone bell had not rung.

Lady Warwick lifted the receiver. A puzzled expression came into her wide open eyes. She made a signal for help, and I responded with alacrity. Think of bringing first aid to a countess!

"What shall I do?" she asked. "Some one is talking to me from Boston."

I have never edited a column for Anxious Subscribers and been able to tell them right away who wrote "Curfew Shall Not Ring To-night," or the age of Sarah Bernhardt, but I could respond to this with a show of intelligence.

"It will take them a long time. All you have to do is to wait."

That is the one thing, apparently, the countess cannot do if by waiting you mean quiescence.

"We might go right on with the interview," she suggested.

I tried to think of some frothy, frivolous subject to fill in the gap, and, my perfectly trained mind never failing to respond to the call made upon it, I was able to ask immediately:

"Are you interested in the science of eugenics? I have tried to get several celebrated people to discuss this subject, but they approach it with a reserve that almost implies fear. Won't you talk freely?

"It is difficult to do that. The subject is radical, subversive. The public must be educated to receive it first, and that will be a gradual process of thought evolution. There is the same reticence displayed in England, and there we are inclined to call a spade a spade, not a gardening implement, and handle it without gloves."

A click at the telephone interrupted. The countess was all at once a woman of the world and a social celebrity.

"It is Mrs. Henry Russell," she explained over her shoulder, "the wife of the director of the Boston Opera House."

"Um—um."

"Are you there?"

"Um—um."

"Oh, I am so glad to see you."

"Um—um."

"Oh, you are so kind. "Oh, do make it a supper party. Late. Yes, I said late—late."

"Um—um."

"Oh, you are so kind. "Yes. No. Yes. No. Oh, no. Oh, yes."

Um—um."

"Goodby. So kind. Goodby."

The Colonel's lady and Peggy O'Grady sisters under the skin. Class and mass bound together by the affinity of the telephone talk. A queer world.

I had been busying myself during this interval by looking over some pamphlets on the table describing the Horticultural College for Women at Studley, Warwickshire. There were several attractive photographs of apiaries, herbaceous gardens, vineries, butter rooms and carpenter shops. I studied all zealously.

When the last word had been spoken over the wire I inquired:

"Don't you think the reason women are such fine gardeners and are so tremendously interested in farm work of all kinds is because the garden is an expression of the maternal instinct? So many spinsters and unhappy, childish women living by themselves become wonderful gardeners or farmers, and then they never seem to be melancholy any more."

Lady Warwick's eyelids came rather close together, an attractive mannerism. "That is an interesting thought, Miss Carew, very pretty, too. It is an idea I must think about, study."

I am so used to compliments on my mental acumen that I did not turn a puff. "Ideas." She rose, walked hurriedly to the fireplace and back. In that moment came to my mind the story of Catherine the Great, of Russia. The story is this:

Returning to the palace after a session of Parliament that had lasted for several days and nights, her tiring woman prepared to remove her royal robes.

"Rest?" exclaimed Catherine, "I want another gown. I am going to a ball." Then, to the evident protest of her maid, she uttered her famous speech. "Motion is life. I want to live, not die."

Like Catherine, the Countess of Warwick gives you the impression of a vitality which disdains inaction as a forerunner and symptom of death. Mentally and physically she is continually alert, and yet one would never apply the term "fidgetty" to her.

SHE ENVIES WEALTHY WOMEN.

She repeats the monosyllables as she walks to and fro. "Ideas! Oh, if I had the money to carry mine out. The Horticultural College is one of my successful experiments, and I put it through on my personal capital. I envy the American women who have the absolute command of great wealth. When they have ideas they can follow them to the ultimate word. They can dream and realize, too. I have to keep pounding away, trying to interest people, forcing them to believe, often in spite of themselves. I could do so much if I were not so hampered."

"Do you think our American women are as keenly interested in serious questions as the English women are?"

"I don't think I should draw a comparison, with the insufficient facts at my disposal. I certainly know some charming, serious, whole-souled American women, but conditions are so different here. You can get all over our little island in a day and a half. It is so small that it is really 'gossipy' and everybody knows what everybody else is doing. We can keep so close in touch that we can organize perfectly. You must work in different ways. Even in New York you are decentralized, forming in cliques, and not really in touch, I understand. How can the women of New York and San Francisco, for instance, get together on any important matter in the 'intime' way that we can at almost a moment's notice. You cannot, and that lack of possible co-operation must have its legitimate consequence in a lack of the personal element, don't you think?"

"The American man is lacking in imagination, isn't he?" I stated, and then asked.

"Have you noticed how the English woman makes a statement that sounds very aggresgive, or at least decisive, and then she gives a little feminine turn to it by ending it with a 'Don't you, now?' or 'Isn't that so?'"

Lady Warwick evidently did not notice that I was a copy cat.

"I know so few men, ten women to one," she murmured. I thought, a little regretfully.

"He has been accused," said I, "of giving too much time to his business, hasn't he?"

That wasn't quite such a success as the other, and the countess looked a bit surprised at my making the question so personal at the end.

"You know, a man can take a great deal of imagination into his business."

I wondered if she was referring to our get-rich-quick schemes, but her next words undeceived me.

"I am inclined to think that the American man puts so much of the real fibre of his imagination into his business, that he has little left for the social life. I believe that he finds glamour, illusion, idealism, even romance to an extent that would surprise us, did we know."

"Then you don't think this is a machine made, commercial age—a Juggernaut riding rough shod over its devotees?"

"We cannot tell what we stand for in the history of the world. We cannot use descriptive terms with accuracy until we have a perspective. Only Time can give that, and when Time bestows the gift we shall have passed beyond to other worlds, to other perspectives."

"Your Mr. William Watson has just said that there is no place for the poet in our

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"HOWDY, COUNTESS?"